

TWO DOCUMENTS RELATING TO Ó CONCHUBHAIR DONN

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The texts presented here are found in two documents that form part of a large collection of material relating to the Lestrangle family of Hunstanton, Norfolk.¹ The collection, formerly held in the evidence room at Hunstanton, was transferred to the Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, in 1952–5.

Thomas Lestrangle held lands in Roscommon and Westmeath from the mid-sixteenth century. A small selection of the items held in the Norfolk Record Office relates to these holdings, and among these are two vellum documents in Irish, which bear the catalogue numbers LEST/NL 9 and LEST/NL 10.² Both documents are copies – dating possibly from the mid-sixteenth century – of two Irish legal texts of the period.³ The originals were written in Maynooth 1516 (LEST/NL 9), and in the monastery of Roscommon in 1510 (LEST/NL 10), by Maoilín Ó Maoil Chonaire and by Muirgheas Ó hUiginn respectively, two members of the most prominent learned families of Connacht of the time. In addition to casting light on the affairs of Ó Conchubhair Donn in the early sixteenth century, the chronicle in LEST/NL 10 of the decline of Clann Cheithearnaigh is of particular interest.

The documents have in common the fact that they refer to the dealings of Ó Conchubhair Donn, Conchubhar mac Eóghain Chaoich, of Ballintober and Castlereagh, Co. Roscommon. Both documents also share a reference to the Earl of Kildare (Gearóid mac Tomáis mheic Sheóin Chaim, 1478–1513). LEST/NL 9 establishes the Earl's 'black rent' (*cion dubh*) on the territory of Ó Conchubhair Donn and the latter's vassalage to the Earl. LEST/NL 10 chronicles the title of Ó Conchubhair Donn to the land of his neighbours, the Clann Cheithearnaigh (McCarneys, Carneys) of Castlereagh (*Caisléan Riabhach Meic Ceithearnaigh*); one of the guarantors of the agreement referred to in this chronicle is the King's Deputy (*Fear Ionaid an Ríogh i nÉirinn*), Gearóid mac Tomáis.

The 1516 date for LEST/NL 9 is at variance, however, with the reference to Gearóid mac Tomáis mheic Sheóin Chaim in that document, as this Gearóid died in 1513.⁴ If the date is correct, then perhaps the solution is to be found in the allusions to the Earl's son towards the end of the deed. The son in question was, presumably, Gearóid Óg, who was Earl of Kildare 1513–34. It may be that this was a copy of the original deed, repeating his claims to the territories in Roscommon.⁵ Another solution suggests itself, however.

¹This family is the subject of a detailed study by Cord Oestmann, *Lordship and community: the Lestrangle family and the village of Hunstanton, Norfolk, in the first half of the sixteenth century* (Woodbridge 1994).

²I am grateful to Anthony Breen, historian, for drawing my attention to these. For permission to publish them here I am grateful to Dr John Alban, County Archivist, Norfolk Record Office.

³For such documents see Pádraig Ó Macháin, 'Dhá théacs dlí', in John Carey, Máire Herbert and Kevin Murray (eds), *Cín Chille Cuaille: texts, saints and places: essays in honour of Pádraig Ó Riain* (Aberystwyth, 2004), 309–15.

⁴E.g. *Ann. Conn.*, 622.

⁵The fact that only one witness is mentioned in the document may be another pointer to its secondary status.

It should be noted that both documents also share a reference to one Tadhg Buidhe,⁶ not as a witness for the legality or authenticity of the arrangements and events that they chronicle, but rather, it would seem, as a later, anecdotal source for some details of time and place. In LEST/NL 9 the authority of the exemplar (*an tseanchairt*) itself, that of the witness (Tomás Cam Ó Maoil Chonaire), and that of Tadhg Buidhe are cited at the conclusion in a later addition. Later additions at the beginning and end of LEST/NL 10 place the authority for the date of that document (1510) and for the place of its writing solely on Tadhg Buidhe. The 1516 date for LEST/NL 9, then, may be an error attributable to Tadhg Buidhe.

These documents may have come into the possession of the Lestrangle family during the course of a dispute that occurred in the 1630s between Aodh Ó Conchubhair Donn and Sir Ha(r)mon Lestrangle, concerning the ownership of the lands in question in LEST/NL 10.⁷ An inquisition of 6 July 1590, held at Roscommon following the death of Thomas Lestrangle, found that he had been in legal possession of ‘a castle called Castlereogh & of the 30 quarters of land in the territory of Clankerno in the county of Roscommon’.⁸ Charles Owen O’Conor Don, quoting a deed of 1585, states that Aodh Ó Conchubhair purchased ‘all the rights of the M’Kearneys’ to the territory of Clann Cheithearnaigh (Clankerno) in that year.⁹ LEST/NL 10, in addition to casting light on the Clann Cheithearnaigh themselves,¹⁰ shows that the proprietorial interest of Ó Conchubhair Donn in this territory originates earlier in the sixteenth century.

In the following transcriptions, manuscript contractions have been expanded in italics. Word division, and capitalisation of proper names are editorial, as are, with very few exceptions, marks of length. Line-breaks are indicated with a forward slash. Textual matter presented between square brackets is a reconstruction of rubbed or faded text. A hyphen is inserted between eclipsing *n*- and vowel-initial words in lower case.

LEST/NL 9¹¹

IS é so cunnrudh Uí Chonchubhair Duinn .i. Conchubhar mac Eóghain Chaoich meic Fhélimidh Gencaigh re hIarlú Chillí / Daro .i. Re Geróid mac Tomáis meic Sheóin Chaim .i. .h. Conchubhair do chengal et an tIarlú re / chéilí go síoruidhe fo chor Dia et fo shlánaibh na naomh ⁊ na coróine ⁊ fo shlánaibh maithe / cundae Chille Daro .i. h. Conchubhair do anmhoin ina óglach díles ag an Iarlú ⁊ dá fhicheat déagg / bó tuc Ó Conchubhair don Iarlú ar tús llics ⁊ ing in gach échetramhuin dá tighndus ar feadh

⁶Perhaps the Tadhg Buidhe son of Ó Conchubhair Donn whose children were killed in 1548 (*ALC* II, 352).

⁷Norfolk Record Office, LEST/NL 25, LEST/NL 23A. Though not immediately pertinent to the dispute, LEST/NL 9 may have come in through association.

⁸Cited in Norfolk Record Office, LEST/NL 25.

⁹*The O’Conors of Connaught* (Dublin, 1891), 220 n. 3. Cf. *The Irish fiants of the Tudor sovereigns* (Dublin 1994) § 4656.

¹⁰Cf. Nollaig Ó Muraíle, ‘The Carneys of Connacht’, in Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach and Kim McCone (eds), *Sages, saints and storytellers: Celtic studies in honour of Professor James Carney* (Maynooth, 1989), 342–57.

¹¹ 288–9 x 195 mm, folded four times to make a package measuring 80–95 x 112 mm. 17 lines. Written in a single hand, identical to that of LEST/NL 10, but with a change of pen after *hbiagáhf od ⁊ dfhiachaibh*. Drawing of a hand accompanies colophon, beneath word *MESE*.

Mhachoire / Chonnacht ṽTuaithi .h. Ainlidhi¹² iolhC ṽnde Cethernaigh¹³ lhSt ṽéibhi Uí Fhloinn¹⁴ It na llaehg od ṽarlu dá chinn / sin do Chonchubhar mac Eóghain Chaoich inad athor do dhéanamh do mac Conchubhair dá ndhechadh Conchubhar uadhó / ṽ do fhágaibh dfhiachaibh ar gach aon dá dtiucfadh ina dhiaidh maith do dhéanamh ar gach aon dá dtiucfadh a ndhiaidh Chonchabuir go brách fo mhinnuibh Brighde Chille Daro ṽ fo shlánaibh / Dia ṽ na coróine do chionn a tucc sé uadhó don Iarlu ṽ dá mac ina dhiaidh .i. cion dubh / sírraidhe do daingneachadh dhó ar dhúthaigh Uí Chonchubhair m ád ṽac ina dhiaidh go brách ṽ dob í aois / Chríost an uair do scríobhadh so .i. Míle bliadhain et cúicc chéad lb és ṽiadhna .x. ṽ do bhí Tom/ás Cam .h. Maoil Chonaire a ufhiadhnuise an chundortha sin ṽ is é do thógaibh na ba /

MESE Maoilín .h. Maoil Chonuire¹⁵ qui scribhsid / a Moigh Nuadhod an¹⁶ tshenchairt so etr.¹⁷ / asor scríobhadh so más fír di fén ohT od ṽmás / Cham ṽ do Thadc Buidhe

This is the contract of Ó Conchubhair Donn, namely Conchubhar son of Eóghan Caoch son of Féilimidh Geancach, with the Earl of Kildare, namely with Gearóid son of Tomás son of Seón Cam.

Thus: Ó Conchubhair and the Earl bind together in perpetuity, under the guarantee of God and under the sureties of the saints and of the crown and under the sureties of the nobles of County Kildare, that Ó Conchubhair is to remain a faithful vassal of the Earl.

And Ó Conchubhair gave, firstly, twelve score cows to the Earl, and a shilling in every carton of his lordship throughout Machaire Connacht and Tuath Uí Ainlidhe and Clann Cheatharnaigh and Sliabh Uí Fhloinn, and the Earl promised on account of that to Conchubhar son of Eóghan Caoch to be as a father to Conchubhar's son should Conchubhar die; and he charged everyone who should succeed him to do good to everyone who should succeed Conchubhar forever under the oaths of Brighid of Kildare and under the sureties of God and of the crown on account of what he gave to

¹²Cinel-Dobhtha, now locally called Doohy-Hanly ... it comprises the parishes of Kilglass, Termonbarry, Cloontuskert, and the eastern half of the parish of Lossonuffy [Co. Roscommon] (John O'Donovan, *The topographical poems of John O'Dubhagain and Giolla na Naomh O'Huidhrin* (Dublin, 1862), xli).

¹³District centred on the parish of Kilkeevin, Co. Roscommon, in which is located the town of Castlereagh: see M. J. Connellan, 'Clann Ceithearnaigh its whereabouts and extent', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 23 (1948–9), 70–74. Note the reference in LEST/NL 10 to 'seachd mbaile Chloinde Ceteraigh'.

¹⁴According to O'Donovan (*FM* III, 92 n.), Sliabh Uí Fhloinn comprised twenty townlands shared between the parishes of Kiltullagh and Kilkeevin, Co. Roscommon.

¹⁵Probably Maoilín mac Torna who died in 1519 and who was noted as the chosen *ollamh* of the Gearaltaigh (*FM* V, 1344). Maoilín Óg mac Maoilín Í Mhaoil Chonaire wrote an agreement between Gearóid Óg mac Gearóid and Féidhlim Mág Raghnaill in Maynooth in 1530 (Charles W. Russell, 'On an agreement, in Irish, between Gerald, ninth Earl of Kildare, and the Mac Rannalls ...', *PRIA* 10 (1869), 480–96).

¹⁶From this word to the end is a later addition in the same hand.

¹⁷Above the line.

the Earl and to his son after him, namely perpetual black rent to be ratified for him in Ó Conchubhair's country and for his son after him forever.

And the age of Christ when this was written was 1516 and Tomás Cam Ó Maoil Chonaire was a witness to that contract and it was he who received the cows.

I am Maoilín Ó Maoil Chonaire who wrote in Maynooth (this old document etc. from which this was written, if it itself and Tomás Cam and Tadhg Buidhe are correct).

LEST/NL10¹⁸

AOIS in tigerna an uair do scrí[bh]adh míle bliadhain c cúic ṡéad lbm x ṡiadhna nísá mhó bígh a chion ar Thadhg mBuidhe¹⁹ /

IS iad so fiacho .h. Conchaphair Dhuind .i. Conchabhor mac Eóghain Chaoich mhic Fhélimidh Ghean/coidh mic Thorrdhelbhaigh meic Aodho meic Thorrdhealbhaigh meic Aodha meic Eóghain meic Ruaidrí meic Aodha meic Chathoil Chroibh/dherg .h. Conchubhair ar Chaisléan Riabhuch Mhic Cethearnoigh et ar in gcetramhain fhearoinn ar a vfhuil an baile .i. Sliocht Comnd/mhaigh meic Mhuireadhaigh Mhuilleathoin .i. Clann Chethearnaigh do ghabhotar fén ag comach et ag cnáimhgherradh ud ga ṡnmharbhodh / a chéile gan ched dá dtigerna soinigta .i. h. Conchubhair Donn .i. Conchubhar mac Eóghain Caoich gur fhásoigheador Clann Cethearnaigh etarro gur scriosotar / a cellu et a tuaith ṡ a aos ealudan gor dhíláitrigheator fén go nach raibhe líon a dtíre do hshuidechadh beó dá n/dhaoínibh gor tuirsigeadh iad fén leth ar leth go ndeachotar dá dtoil ṡ dá n-aonto fén a ceand a tigerna .i. Ó Conchubhair Donn .i. Conchubhar mac / Eóghain Caoich ni od ṡniseator dó go rabhotar toirrsach ṡ gur mhithidh leó síth do dhénomh gnec od ṡail Ó Conchubhair síth etarro fo shlánaibh Dia / ṡ na naomh nálhs of ṡaibh Uí Conchubhair lhC ṡainni Suibhne ṡ chell et tuath ṡ aos ealudan Condacht of ṡ shlánaibh Fir Ionaid an Rígh i nÉrinn .i. Geróid mac / Tomáis buda ṡairt Ó Conchubhair gor dhaoine scaiti Clann Cethernaigh g ehbior hcan ṡraighthiuch²⁰ nó áirgheacho acu ón a n-olc fén htú/dn a ehbior og ṡaigh ina fásuch ṡ nach roibhe a fhios aige fén dá marbhdóeis Clann Ceithearnaigh a chéile mar do rindedor roimhe gá vfhuigheadh sé geall orra / ṡ dá curdaois Clann Ceithearnaigh gell do ghoirteóchadh iad fén roimhe go rachadh sé a slánaibh orra ṡ do chuatarsomh a gcomhairle etarro / fén moc í si ṡhairli aror chindeator a mbhaile puirt fén .i. Caislén Riabhuch Meic Ceathernaigh ṡ seachd mbaile Chloinde Ceteraigh do cur remhe / a nghell re dá fhichead dég loilgech do thoil ṡ daonto Chloinde Ceteraigh uile ṡ is é do badh Mac Ceathernaigh ann .i. Seóinín Mac / Ceathearnoigh ṡ tar és a sláno ṡ a gcengal c a ṡairdes Críost do mharbh Seóinín fo ceann aimsire gerra ina

¹⁸190–200 x 287–95 mm, folded four times to make a package 75–83 x 108 mm. 26 lines. Written in a single hand, identical to that of LEST/NL 9. Heading (*Aois in tigerna* etc.) in ornamental box, extended to accommodate marginal addition; similar ornamental border extends along left and right margins.

¹⁹*bígh a chion ar Thadhg mBuidhe*: a marginal addition in the same hand.

²⁰I have no other example of this word. On the assumption that it derives from *grai*gh ‘horses’, I translate it as ‘groom’.

dhiaigh sin / dís mac Tomaltaigh Meic Ceternaigh ar slánaibh Uí Conchubhair F 7ir Ionaid an Rígh 7 ní fado ina dhiaidh sin arís gur mharbh an Seóin/ín céadna clann Eóghain Meic Ceternaigh ar na [slánaibh] céadna 7 da aguir [... Ó Con]chubhair na sláno ar an méd do mhair do Chloind Ceternaigh hc od 7óidh sé / a selbh an chaisléin htúd an 7che 7 do ghlac iad a nghill rena shlánaibh ehterb cur 7main chilli 7 tuaithi in tíre sin / dó do bhreth gur maith fuair sé sin t 7uc Clann Ceternaigh dá toil fén n ád 7-aonto in Caisléan Riabhach hc na 7etramho feruinn do bhí faoi maille / buidhechus mór do Chonchubhar m ád 7ac 7 dá hoigridhibh [sic] ina dhiaigh a nghell re dá fhicheat dég loilgeach 7 in cuid ele don tír do tabairt dóib / fén daif dai si 7hain an connortha sin .i. an tEspag Gréacach²¹ raiD caM 7mado .i. Cormac mac Ruaidrí meic Ruaidrí Caoich²² M 7ac Cerbhuill ón Termonn²³ .i. Lochluinn / 7 an Gilla Glasruadh Ó Flandogáin dá oirchindech chilli do Chloinn Ceternoigh fén doA 7h Ó Flannagáin²⁴ ó Chill Chaoimghin²⁵ .i. preláid mór / egluise 7 taoisigh Uí Conchubhair mar atá Ó Birn iAh Ó 7nlidhi 7 Muintir Fhloind 7 Clann tShuibhne 7 clann saoidaeacht na tírthadh uile go himshlán / 7 tuilleadh ele tuc .h. Conchubhair .x. mba 7 da .xx. tuc sé do chuid Cethernaigh do gerradh dFer Inaidh in Rígh ar dúthaigh Uí Chonchubhair as [don dís]²⁶ céadna

MESE [M]uirgheas / mac Mhaoileachlainn meic Céin Uí Uiccinn qui scrivhsid a mainisdair Rosa Comáin do thoil in dá ra[nn] Tadhg Buidhe is fíor sin fón ionad²⁷

The age of the Lord when [this] was written was 1510 (let Tadhg Buidhe be blamed for it).

These are the dues of Ó Conchubhair Donn (namely Conchubhar son of Eóghan Caoch son of Féilimidh Geancach son of Toirdhealbhach son of Aodh son of Toirdhealbhach son of Aodh son of Eóghan son of Ruaidhrí son of Aodh son of Cathal Croibhdhearg Ó Conchubhair) on Caisléan Riabhach Meic Ceithearnaigh and on the carton of land occupied by the town.

Thus: the line of Connmhach son of Muireadhach Muilleathan, namely Clann Cheithearnaigh, they themselves began hewing and mutilating and murdering each other heedless of their pre-eminent lord (i.e. Ó Conchubhair Donn i.e. Conchubhar son of Eóghan Caoch), so that they laid waste Clann Cheithearnaigh between them, so that they destroyed its religious, lay and learned people, so that they exterminated themselves, so that there did not survive of their people enough to occupy their territory, so that they themselves were wearied one by one, so that willingly and by their own agreement they approached their lord, namely Ó Conchubhair Donn (i.e.

²¹Georgius de Brana, Bishop of Elphin 1499–c.1508 (*NHI* IX, 283, 328), whose death in 1529 the annalists (s.a. 1530) considered no setback to charity: see *Ann. Conn.*, 674 n. 4. His obit makes it clear that he was still accorded his nickname and title when no longer Bishop of Elphin.

²²Died 1528 (*FM*, *Ann. Conn.*, *ALC*).

²³Probably the townlands of Termon Beg and Termon More, par. Kilkeevin, bar. Castlereagh.

²⁴Eugenius Ó Flannagáin, Bishop of Achonry 1508–c.1516; died c. 1522 (*NHI* IX, 322).

²⁵Kilkeevin parish, bar. Castlereagh.

²⁶Text very rubbed at this point. If construed correctly, this may be a reference to the two sons of Tomaltach Mac Ceithearnaigh mentioned earlier in the text.

²⁷*Tadhg Buidhe is fíor sin fón ionad*: a later addition in the same hand.

Conchubhar son of Eóghan Caoch), and they told him that they were weary and that they thought it time to make peace.

And Ó Conchubhair made peace between them under the sureties of God and the saints and under the sureties of Ó Conchubhair and Clann Suibhne and of the religious, lay and learned people of Connacht, and under the sureties of the King's Deputy in Ireland, namely Gearóid son of Tomás. And Ó Conchubhair said that Clann Cheithearnaigh were a shorn people, and that due to their own badness they had not groom nor herdsmen, and that their territory was a wasteland, and that he himself did not know, if Clann Cheithearnaigh were to kill each other as they had done previously, where he would get a pledge for them. And if Clann Cheithearnaigh were to present him with a pledge that would be detrimental to themselves, he would go surety for them.

And they took counsel among themselves, and the decision they came to was to present him with their own stronghold, namely Caislén Riabhach Meic Ceithearnaigh, and the seven homesteads of Clann Cheithearnaigh, as a pledge for twelve score milch cows by the consent and agreement of all Clann Cheithearnaigh.

And the Mac Ceithearnaigh then was namely Seóinín Mac Ceithearnaigh. And after [making] their sureties and pacts and covenants, a short time after that Seóinín killed the two sons of Tomaltach Mac Ceithearnaigh against the sureties of Ó Conchubhair and the King's Deputy. And it was not long after that again that the same Seóinín killed the children of Eóghan Mac Ceithearnaigh against the same sureties.

And [then] Ó Conchubhair made claim for the sureties on what remained of Clann Cheithearnaigh. And he took possession of the castle and the territory and he took them in compensation for his sureties. And the lay and religious lawyers of that country adjudged for him that he had taken just possession of them. And willingly and by their own agreement Clann Cheithearnaigh gave An Caislén Riabhach and the carton of land under it, with great thanks, to Conchubhar, and to his son and heirs after him, in return for giving them twelve score milch cows and the rest of the country.

And the witnesses to that contract are namely An tEaspag Gréagach and Mac Diarmada (i.e. Cormac son of Ruaidhrí son of Ruaidhrí Caoch), and Mac Cearbhaill from the Tearmann (i.e. Lochlainn) and the Giolla Glasruadh Ó Flannagáin (two church airchinneachs of Clann Cheithearnaigh itself), and Aodh Ó Flannagáin from Cill Chaoimhghin (i.e. a great Church prelate), and the chieftains of Ó Conchubhair, namely Ó Beirn and Ó hAinlidhe, and Muintear Fhloind, and Clann Suibhne, and all the learned community of all the territories.

And moreover, of the amount he had given as the portion of Clann Cheithearnaigh, Ó Conchubhair gave fifty cows to the King's Deputy as a tax on the country of Ó Conchubhair and [in compensation for those same two?]

I am Muirgheas son of Maoileachlainn son of Cian Ó hUiginn who wrote [this] in the monastery of Roscommon by the will of the two parties. (Tadhg Buidhe that is correct concerning the location.)